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Auteurs of Revolution: The Work of Godard, Pasolini, and Antonioni and the Student Protests of 1968

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AUTEURS OF REVOLUTION: THE WORK OF GODARD, PASOLINI, AND ANTONIONI AND THE STUDENT PROTESTS OF 1968

by
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ABSTRACT
SHELBI STOVALL: Auteurs of Revolution: The Work of Godard, Pasolini, and Antonioni and the Student Protests of 1968
(Under the direction of Dr. Joshua First)

When one looks to analysis of Western movements of 1968, one commonly finds either partisan commentary on exact protest actions, ignorance to the movements' philosophical background, or no recognition of artistic responses to the political ideology of the student protestors. The image which emerges of 1968 in France, Italy, and the Unites States is thus simple, tedious, and without reference to the greater sphere of Marxist thought which exists in traditional politics or the cinematic realm. This thesis analyzes the historical moment of 1968 as it relates to and is reflected by the cinematic work and personal responses of directors Jean Luc Godard, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Michelangelo Antonioni. These three auteurs provide extensive perspectives on the social, political, and artistic complexities which surround 1968 as shown through two selected films of the individual directors, interviews given throughout their lifetimes, and various biographical writings.

Research on the protestors and political leaders of 1968 comes from historical sources which were written more recently or were contemporary to the time period. For further insight into Godard, Pasolini, and Antonioni, and the students of 1968, this thesis also looks to the work of various figures of the New Left political movement such as Herbert Marcuse and Antonio Gramsci. Their philosophical writings provide a foundation from which research can begin, specifically because all components of the research were so heavily influenced by New Leftist understandings of their social and political situation. Through examining the responses of directors contemporary to 1968 and their

place within late 1960s social upheaval, this thesis highlights the importance of using artistic creations to provide insight for contentious political movements in both the mid 20th century and beyond.

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Introduction

Author Hunter S. Thompson reflects upon the movements of the late 1960s in his novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as thus, "There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning ... And that, I think, was the handle - that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil." This feeling, the assurance that true change was coming, that the social upheaval enacted by the counterculturists and the politicized youth of the 1960s would prevail past adversity spans nations and preexisting political circumstances. In France, Italy, West Germany, the United States, and beyond, the decade saw seemingly countless demonstrations organized by young people who were galvanized by the writings of philosophers of their past and present. Thinkers like Herbert Marcuse told the protestors, specifically the intellectual youth, that social change was within their grasp, and they were more than willing to take him up on the offer of political legitimacy.[1]

As with most analysis of the countercultural events of the 1960s, the movements of 1968 are often recalled with nostalgia and are romanticized to the point of historical exaggeration. The students and revolutionaries who protested and rebelled against the past represented only a small portion of their peers but left ripples within their respective countrys' political structures which carry into the present day. The New Left, in their advance toward new political and social systems which rejected the cultural hegemony of

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[1] Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties,* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1998), 292.

their times, tended toward methodologies which were seemingly contradictory. Those in the movement rejected conventional leadership while canonizing figures like Mao Zedong or Che Guevara, promoted direct democracy while acknowledging the concerns of the accepted few, and outright rejected the influence of preexisting Old Left institutions on the grounds that they were just as unsatisfactory as their right wing counterparts.

In the context of this thesis, the question could rightfully be posed, "Why analyze individual directors or the cinematic medium at all regarding a historical moment as complex as 1968?" Film itself is a complex medium, an industrialized process that somehow has the ability to portray the expressions of one individual, the auteur. The works of individual directors are key in understanding a multitude of their perspectives, be they personal, social, or political. From the complexities of their films, one can further examine the complexities of revolution. Using cinema to provide context for greater political and social shifts has been long ignored in conventional historical education, especially regarding the wealth of knowledge and insight that can be derived from the study of filmmakers and the methods they employ. The intersection of politics and film, or the intersection of politics and an artistically expressive person, can illuminate historical moments and perspectives like no other medium. Cinema is commonly understood only as variations on the theme of light and sound but, in truth, films can unify revolutionary politics, art, and philosophy. It is my hope through this thesis to provide a lens through which the philosophical and political phenomenons of 1968 can be

examined through the judgments and various approaches of three directors who were artistically engaged with the late 1960s.

Jean-Luc Godard, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Michelangelo Antonioni are three directors whose approach to and interpretation of the politics of 1968 give the actions of student protestors the world over greater context. In some instances, especially in the case of Godard, the directors use the aesthetics and embrace the politics of the New Left movements which they saw both at home and abroad. The three directors also critique the movements in varying ways, either in noting their separation from the working classes they sought to represent or in attacking their underlying motivations altogether. More importantly, the directors engage with the philosophies which were defused through the May "'68ers" and employ them throughout their work. They address and artistically elevate such themes as alienation, the importance of dialectical tools, the suppressive nature of older Leftist groups, and even the disillusionment which came after the movements faded from relevance.

Overall, it is critical to understand with this thesis that Godard, Pasolini, and Antonioni are speaking from a wide variety of experience and perspective. All three directors, at one point or another, were involved with Marxist politics. They therefore represent a specific response to 1968, that of fellow leftists reflecting on highly publicized protest events and radical ideology. There are, of course, a wide variety of opinions which concern the movement with respect to the conventional political spectrum, but it is my assertion through this thesis that examining expressive leftist individuals is the best course of action to understand the movements of 1968.

Chapter One: The Student Movements of 1968 in France and Italy

When examining or discussing "1968" in a historical context, scholars usually understand it as the intersection of student protests predominately in the West and New Left ideology which sprang out of the increased industrialization, urbanization, and dynamic Marxist critiques of the mid 20th century.[2] Those in the global 1968 movement, mostly university students, were concerned not with the exploitation of the working classes in the West but the alienation and lack of agency they felt within their own societies. They looked past the issues within their respective countries to reflect on the issues that what they understood as symptomatic of a worldwide capitalist system. In other words, they knew that in order to meet their goals and political aspirations, they would have to place their movements in an international context. Those involved in the movement looked to "Marx, Marcuse, and Mao" to work toward lasting and international, social, cultural and political change.[3]

Wider Philosophical and Cultural Context

The ideology of the students of 1968 can be sourced in the Western Marxist thought most notably developed by Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt between the mid 1920s and into the 1960s, commonly know as the Frankfurt School. Philosophers associated with the school such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin,

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[2] Robert W. Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse,* (New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 4.

[3] Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, 6.

Siegfried Kracauer, and Herbert Marcuse translated traditional Marxist thought to a greater critical analysis of contemporary society and the functional power of mass culture.[4] Marcuse proved to be most crucial in the movements of 1968 thanks to his work in updating Marxist dialectics and critiques of the Soviet Union.[5] His *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* from 1964 asserted that mass media was a capitalistic tool to suppress the lower classes and that the revolutionary youth were essential in bringing about effective political activism.[6] Not only that, the "new authoritarianism" of the technocratic era creates, in Marcuse's words, "satisfaction in a way which generates submission and weakens the ideology of protest".[7] Alongside Marcuse's critique of society, the earlier work of Antonio Gramsci, himself a founding member of the Italian Communist Party, examined the cultural aspects of capitalism's power and believed that political change can only come from sweeping cultural changes.[8] His concept of "cultural hegemony" became a key component in the more radical factions of the 1968 movements, particularly those who asserted that all aspects of society should be rejected because of their bourgeois associations.

The Effects of Youth Culture

The students' rise to significance can be attributed to the rise of an international youth culture. The years immediately after World War II, especially in the United States,

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[4] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy,* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 259.

[5] Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse,* 10.

[6] Marwick, *The Sixties*, 292.

[7] Theodore Roszak, *Making of a Counter Culture,* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 14.

[8] Eley, *Forging Democracy,* 211.

France, Great Britain, and Italy, saw increasing birthrates and individual economic affluence. Simply put, there were more young people with more purchasing power and businesses began marketing to this new demographic.[9] Youth subculture and its international ubiquity was also aided by the rise of urbanization and mass media outlets such as television and radio. Western young people not only felt that they had tangible cultural power, they felt that they could form a united front against whatever they collectively saw as unacceptable.[10] From France to Italy to the United States, what ties the movements of 1968 together is the belief that they could and would create lasting social change. They were members of a global movement which told them that their feelings of alienation, anger, and disillusionment with current political systems could be remedied only if they spoke out and became as overtly revolutionary as possible. One can clearly see that their actions at the end of the decade created a self fulfilling prophesy and although politics largely returned to the status quo in their respective counties, they succeeded in creating an ongoing dialogue about the problematic nature of the world in which they lived, especially regarding the roles of authority, consumerism, and social suppression.

United States as Inspiration

Looking to the United States in 1968, it is important to note that the student movements in the earlier part of the decade had a large influence on the protest tactics and even political ideology of students in Europe. For example, those in France and Italy used teach ins and sit ins as a form of passive protest, a tactic which began in the United

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[9] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 45.

[10] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 42.

States.[11] Even the various manifestos published by revolutionary groups took inspiration from the Port Huron Statement of 1962 from the Students for Democratic Society which asserted that direct and public democracy was key in sparking social upheaval.[12] The United States, with its early expansion of higher education in the 1950s and the sheer number of young adults due to the Baby Boom, had a rapid and early entrance into radical politics.[13]

For the most part, the protests of the 1960s and the goals which were tied to them in the United States revolved around concerns about the Vietnam War. While American students did carry New Leftist ideology about social reconstruction, their initial goal was to end military drafting and withdraw troops from Vietnam. In 1968, such concerns were exacerbated by the Tet Offensive and an international shift of opinions about the war as a whole. Protestors now felt that something must be done in "desperate haste" in order to preserve what they understood as the ideals of the nation.[14]

The two events in 1968 which most clearly resemble the protests in Europe were the occupation of Columbia University on April 23rd and the demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in late August. The former of the protests also included race and the oppression of African Americans as a point of contention; it was felt that black students needed empowering spaces in the university either through the creation of

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[11] Kurz and Tolomelli, "Italy", 90.

[12] Karol Sołtan, "The Divided Spirit of the Sixties," in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 140.

[13] Roszak, *Making of a Counter Culture,* 28.

[14] Roszak, *Making of a Counter Culture,* 48.

African Studies classes or greater acceptance of black power organizations.[15] The protests at the Democratic Convention, however, were more concerned with ending the Vietnam War by utilizing international media who would already be covering the event. The intention of demonstrators to use the media to their advantage ultimately backfired; they knew the "whole world was watching" but did not expect their efforts to be portrayed as only foolish disruption and utilized by the Nixon campaign in his later appeals to the "silent majority".[16] Like the protests in Italy and France, the movements of 1968 in the United States did involve violence on the part of students and police but they did not mobilize workers or garner similar levels of sympathy to any tangible extent.

Context of the French Movement

In the case of the student movements within France, one cannot overstate the past history and influence of revolutionary activities. From the French Revolution to workers' protests in 1936, France's position as a fountainhead of radical political ideology influenced not only national politics and culture but the wider sphere of European revolution into the mid 20th century.[17] Raymond Aron, a philosopher of Marxist thought, professed that the French people had a "revolutionary soul" which facilitated the destructive demonstrations of May 1968.[18] This past history of revolution was eventually

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[15] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 643.

[16] Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, "Introduction" in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. Carole Fink, Phillip Gassert, and Detlef Junker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.

[17] Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: The French May Events of 1968* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 48.

[18] Aurelian Craiutu, "Thinking Politically" in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia,* ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu. (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2011), 107.

capitalized by the students of 1968; they felt that their movement, even without the support of the worker's unions or the French Communist Party, could meet the same goals as their revolutionary predecessors.[19] The Night of the Barricades in Paris's Latin Quarter on May 10th also saw the students directly utilizing revolutions of France's past. In their view, the almost playful building of the barricades alluded to the Paris Commune of 1871 and the liberation of Paris from Nazi Germany in 1944. Their efforts at the barricades, unlike those of the past, were done so as a deliberate historical expression.[20] The students wished to be recognized as standing on the shoulders of revolutionary giants and used France's greater revolutionary context to give their movement more legitimacy.

The movement itself had its beginnings at the University of Nanterre, an industrial suburb ten miles outside of Paris. As a whole, the University was somewhat progressive in how students were involved with administrative practices and decisions. Past divisions between professors and students were also broken down by prioritizing casual learning spaces and offering nontraditional courses.[21] These high levels of direct involvement and clear academic influence of students in the University of Nanterre gave them the initial confidence to speak out and organize against what they saw as affronts to their educational, social, and political goals.

Initially, protests in Nanterre were sparked by opposition to reforms for the sake of "efficiency". Charles de Gaulle's Fouchet Reforms of Higher Education were

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[19] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 48.

[20] Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "France," in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 115.

[21] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 4.

implemented at Nanterre in 1967 and worked to codify the French university system under a plan that encouraged competition and decreased students' free time. The students of Nanterre saw these reforms as an Americanization and suppression of an educational system which fostered individual growth and an atmosphere of leisurely learning which they saw as central to French culture.[22] By March of 1968, small groups organized around seeking exceptions for the Fouchet Reforms and began outwardly protesting by disrupting university procedures. The intentions and overarching goals of such groups transformed over the spring to not only withdrawing the Fouchet Reforms but also reconstructing the University of Nanterre into an institution which acted as a starting point for a true social radicalization.[23]

Ideology of the Students

This idea that revolution should disrupt not only political systems but also social and cultural systems has its roots in Marxist philosophical discussions which had emerged a decade earlier. The "New Left" combined elements of psychoanalysis and rejected the Stalinist vision that became so closely associated with communism. Also, it argued that politics could solve the issues which were sourced from capitalist society and that people's lives and culture were being improperly affected.[24] The aspirations of the New Left in the mid 20th century were concerned with heightening individualism while

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[22] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 5.

[23] Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "May 1968 in France" in *1968: The World Transformed,* ed. Carole Fink, Phillip Gassert, and Detlef Junker. (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 260.

[24] Eley, *Forging Democracy,* 356.

decreasing the prevailing effect of alienation in society. It should be noted that the New Left in France and across the rest of Europe never understood themselves as an organized body, they were instead a movement which constantly pushed for radical shifts in power.[25] The only concrete idea which truly united them was the necessity of collective action and the implementation of direct democracy as a political system.[26]

Those who translated New Left methodologies most radically were referred to as "enragés" who also adopted ideology of figures like Che Guevara and Mao Zedong.[27] Their protest tactics such as disrupting lectures, openly rebelling against Nanterre administration, and physically fighting with militant right wing groups brought a decisive factor to the movements of 1968: large numbers of police on campus and thus a tangible authoritarian presence. Not only did this cause more numbers of students to join with student protestors in solidarity, it dramatized what was understood as state repression and helped spread the movement to the Sorbonne.[28] On March 22nd, five hundred students joined the enragés to occupy Nanterre's main campus building in protest of the arrest of four anti-war demonstrators. Those who became known as the "March 22 Movement" thus sparked a greater conflict with nationwide influence and provided the protestors of May an organizational structure they could mobilize behind.[29]

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[25] Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "France", 113-114.

[26] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 343.

[27] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 6.

[28] Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "May 1968 in France", 260.

[29] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 10.

The Red Fridays and the Night of the Barricades

The first events of May 1968 began when protestors from Nanterre and those who had taken up the cause at the Sorbonne gathered to discuss the developments with the March 22 Movement and were quickly asked to leave the Sorbonne campus by police. The first "Red Friday" of May 1968 rapidly turned to violence as hundreds of students were arrested and it appeared that university administration used authoritarian measures to suppress the political expression of French students. By the end of the protests of May 3rd, the Sorbonne would also be shut down and the numbers of protestors greatly increased. [30] In terms of reactions from authorities, officials openly mocked the ideology and protest tactics of the students but also continuously increased police presence around the Sorbonne and in Paris. By simultaneously delegitimizing the May 1968 movement and using authoritarian methods, the French government rapidly caused the students to feel as if more drastic measures were needed if they were to be taken seriously and have their concerns heard. [31]

The Night of the Barricades, when protesters occupied the Latin Quarter and other Parisian neighborhoods to force the administration to heed the movement's demands, marked an absolute turn to violence on the part of the students and police and became emblematic of the movement as a whole. Students began throwing Molotov cocktails and paving stones at police who retaliated in the early morning hours of May 11th with tear gas, grenades, and batons.[32] Police action rapidly devolved into attacking

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[30] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 11-12.

[31] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 20.

[32] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 608.

sympathetic bystanders, the already wounded, and students who were fleeing from the barricades. Such violent oppression attracted not only media attention but also support from Old Left institutions. The following Monday, on May 13th, the French Communist Party and the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) organized general strikes across the country and showed overt support of the efforts and sacrifices of the student workers. Not only that, the Sorbonne also reopened on May 13th which allowed protestors to commandeer the campus and use it for revolutionary purposes.[33]

New Left vs. Old Left and the End of the Movement

The support of the Communist Party and the CGT in the wake of the Night of the Barricades would not last long due to a contention between the Old Leftists' need to present a moderate face and the overall radical exuberance of the students.[34] The Old and New Left ideologies were also divergent especially concerning the role of the worker and methods of attaining governmental power. In the New Leftist view, the proletariat was not the main impetus for social and cultural change that broke individual alienation, which was the ultimate goal of the May 1968 movement.[35] Instead, the intelligentsia and other educated groups were meant to bring about a new social and cultural reality which worked in unison with Marxism's inherent objective of emancipation.[36] That is not to stay that the working classes were not welcomed by the students of 1968; at the Sorbonne

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[33] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 26.

[34] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 28.

[35] Jan-Werner Müller, "What Did They Think They Were Doing?: The Political Thought of 1968 Revisited," in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 77.

[36] Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "France", 114.

especially, workers' input was greatly valued during demonstrations and meetings. For the most part, students did not become involved in factory strikes and maintained a separation between the industrial and collegiate spheres.[37] Reluctancy to be involved with older leftist organizations came from the concern they were only interested in acquiring power through already oppressive channels such as the French National Assembly. One protestor commented, "The unions want to control everything and do nothing." [38]

In the end, the death of the French movement came from a shift of focus from their own concerns to concerns of industrial workers. By the last days of May, de Gaulle's government entered into negotiations with unions and workers to end the factory strikes which had sprung up across France. This was a prevailing concern of the May 1968 movement as shown in leader Cohn-Bendit statement, "We must avoid getting bogged down in theory and ideology ... otherwise, Mitterrand, the unions and the government will arrive at a solution suitable to them all, and the movement with be smothered." [39] The Grenelle Agreements, which increased wages and provided greater social security reimbursement for medical care, seized whatever relevance the student movement had gained and spelled an end to the waves of social disruption.[40]

Italy and France: Their Similarities

In many ways, the student movements of 1968 in Italy were very similar to those in France. Both countries had undergone huge economic changes in the late 1950s which

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[37] Clifford Deaton, "The Memory of May '68: The Ironic Interruption and Democratic Commitment of the Atelier Populaire", *Design Issues* 29 (2013), 39.

[38] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 35.

[39] Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets,* 62.

[40] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 619.

causes large numbers of agricultural workers to move into industrial centers where they felt more political agency.[41] In the case of Italy, such transformations in society included migrations from the southern regions, a shift from traditional family structures, and an increased turn from religion occurred in the span of only five years.[42] The Italian movement also came to prominence in industrial cities like Turin where the tedium of living in a non-cosmopolitan area and identification with factory workers aided in student mobilization. Also, Italian and French revolutionaries were adopting and employing the same ideological sources, in particular the work of Herbert Marcuse.[43] The Italian students, despite their lack of a strong national revolutionary heritage, also sought to implement New Left ideals through their movement.

What makes Italy truly unique in the context of a global 1968 is the role of the Catholic church and the lack of a strong secular community. There was a recognition from the movement that the clergy had an undue prominence in the Italian political structure and that the liberation of women was decades behind the rest of Europe.[44] Still, progress was being made in breaking traditional social forms with the Second Vatican Council of 1959 and when Pope John XXIII called for increased dialogue between communist institutions and the Roman Catholic Church. Such changes of long held

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[41] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 115.

[42] Jan Kurz and Marica Tolomelli, “Italy” in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 83-84.

[43] Stuart J. Hilwig, "The Revolt Against the Establishment" in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. Carole Fink, Phillip Gassert, and Detlef Junker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 337.

[44] Giuseppe Marino, “Italy: We Demand The Impossible”, *Euro Topics*, Accessed March 11, 2016, http://archiv.eurotopics.net/en/home/presseschau/archiv/magazin/geschichte-verteilerseite-neu/achtundsechzig-2008-03/filice-rom-1968/

doctrines and slight religious acceptance of leftist political ideology emboldened Italy's youth, who were overwhelmingly Catholic, to become more involved in the New Left.[45]

Demonstrations and Ideological Shifts

The beginnings of May 1968 in Italy can be traced back to series of events two years prior. The first was a demonstration at the University of Trento concerning the creation of a diploma of sociology, a goal which was rapidly met thanks to occupation of campus spaces. More notably, on April 27th, 1966, a University of Rome student named Paolo Rossi died in a fall during a clash between left-wing and neofascist agitators causing protests to occur nationwide about the incident. At the University of Trento, protests turned violent thanks to an understanding that it was not the direct actions of neofascists which caused Rossi's death but the overarching oppressive nature of society. Students now recognized through their efforts in 1966 that more active forms of political involvement could bring palpable results. [46] Various protest events influenced May of 1968 in how they formed an organizational foundation for further demonstrations and gave protestors the confidence to unify under distinct socially radical goals and directly implement New Left ideology.

Through 1967 and the beginning of 1968, protests continued to surge across Italy on university campuses which effectively shut down higher education altogether. As with France, the turning point of the movement occurred when students in Rome from the University of Turin used violence against police on March 1st of 1968. Their main grievance concerned the arrests of student leaders and how they were portrayed within *La*

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[45] Hilwig, "The Revolt Against the Establishment", 337.

[46] Kurz and Tolomelli, "Italy", 88.

Stampa, a newspaper which openly sided with university administration and labeled the students a dangerous influence.[47] *La Stampa* was most critical of the student occupation of the Palazzo Campagna in Turin, a key event in the mind of the movement, and dismissed their goal to make the University of Turin an institution for a "new kind of society" which only enraged students further.[48] Protests were also occurring more frequently outside of universities, which facilitated both the spread of revolutionary ideas to the working class and gave the protestors a higher level of media exposure.[49] Not only that, students began to shift their objectives to integrate the concerns of industrial workers and form greater political connections with those not wholly concerned with New Left ideology.[50]

The Old Left in Italy

Keeping the ideological shift of the Italian students in mind, it should be noted that like their counterparts in France, the movement was highly suspicious of Old Left institutions such as the Italian Communist Party (P.C.I) and the various unions who vied for power. In the minds of the 1968 movement, the values of leftist elders were just as insignificant as the values of right wing elders.[51] They also took issue with the bureaucratic and leadership oriented nature of the Old Left and sought new workers' organizations that were highly democratic and "in which socialism must be realized

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[47] Hilwig, "The Revolt Against the Establishment", 342.

[48] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 589.

[49] Hilwig, "The Revolt Against the Establishment", 340-342.

[50] Kurz and Tolomelli, "Italy", 89-90.

[51] Marino, "Italy: We Demand The Impossible"

through autonomy and liberation".[52] Eventually, this did prompt workers in northern industrial cities to strike outside of union involvement, but their efforts did not parallel in scope to the worker's strikes which occurred in France. Ultimately, this dismissal of Old Left institutions by the movement spelled an end to strong university mobilization by the end of the 1968 school year and few substantial changes were maintained in the Italian university system. [53] What did last after the end of the late 1960s for the youth of Italy was, in the words of a University of Turin student, "a liberation and modernization of customs, of interpersonal relations ... between the sexes ... between parents and children, of the family structure that was radical and irreversible." [54]

Right vs. Left in Italy

The Italian faction of the 1968 movement, as previously mentioned, dealt with criticism from right leaning political organization who were either governmentally established or small antagonistic groups who actively protested against the New Leftists. By the early 1960s, the Christian Democrats (DC) held the majority of power within the Italian political structure and worked against reformist policies which were being pushed by the Italian Communist Party (P.C.I).[55] Their efforts to suppress and weaken the power of the P.C.I turned many jaded socialists and politically inclined students to New Left ideology with its call for forceful action. Their prevailing hope for the P.C.I. was that the

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[52] Kurz and Tolomelli, "Italy", 86.

[53] Hilwig, "The Revolt Against the Establishment", 348.

[54] Kurz and Tolomelli, "Italy", 93.

[55] Kurz and Tolomelli, "Italy", 84.

Party's founding ideals and the work Antonio Gramsci be restored on the national stage.[56]

It should also be noted that the Italian students of 1968 were facing an expansive history of cultural traditionalism and fascism. Unlike France, Italy did not possess a strong secular culture which manifested most clearly in Catholic universities where students felt the curriculum was, in the words of author Arthur Marwick, "particularly authoritarian and restrictive of personal liberties".[57] There was a tangible feeling on the part of the students that they were not only criticizing the P.C.I. but also the lifestyles of the generations which had come before.[58] In their protests, some students literally fought against the traditional understanding of Italian life in the form of right-wing and neofascist counter protestors who openly antagonized them in the streets.[59]

In the end, every little of what the Italian and French students worked for survived to the end of the 1960s. They, like so many other revolutionary efforts, were overshadowed by other political concerns. Their lack of strict organizational structure, though it was an expression of direct democracy, ultimately spelled their downfall in the face of more adequately equipped institutions. May 1968 remains a defining moment of the 20th century because it shows the consequences and realities of mobilizing behind philosophical concepts in their supposedly purest form.

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[56] Hilwig, "The Revolt Against the Establishment", 337.

[57] Marwick, *The Sixties,* 587.

[58] Müller, "What Did They Think They Were Doing?: The Political Thought of 1968 Revisited", 99.

[59] Kurz and Tolomelli, "Italy", 88.

Chapter Two: Godard's Dziga Vertov Group and the Politicization of Cinema

In a darkened television studio, a young couple lit by a single light ask themselves and each other if they can make sense of what will be left of their revolution, their society, and their political structure. Can they truly know what is real, what should be kept? The woman states, "To find the solution, whether chemical or political, one must dissolve. Dissolve hydrogen, dissolve parliament. Here, we're going to dissolve image and sound." This scene from Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Gai Savoir* is revolution as science, revolution as total rejection, and revolution as cinema. The events of 1968 transformed Godard, an already highly influential and political filmmaker, into an auteur tasked with bringing the politics of the students to the cinema and in doing so, attempt to change virtually all aspects of the medium. Godard wished, in again the words of his character, to truly "Go back to zero."

For the most part, Godard's background was upper class and something that he came to resent as his antibourgeois tendencies manifested. Born in 1930, his father was a well-established doctor and his mother the daughter of a prominent French banker.[60] Godard would come to absorb pro-Nazi media during World War II and the Vichy regime but also hear overt support of the Germans by his maternal grandparents. His upbringing

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[60] Richard Brody, *Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard.* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt &, 2008), 4.

became one of the primary criticisms of student protestors over concerns that his perspective was essentially bourgeois or even fascist. Godard's interest and relationship with cinema in his teens was primarily only for entertainment purposes and initially he planned to study engineering at the Lycée Buffon in Paris. It was only after Godard read André Malraux's essay "Outline of a Psychology of Cinema" and began watching films at the Cinémathèque, a film archive and screening institution, that he recognized film as an art form and a medium through which he could render his own politics and world view.[61]

Prior to May 1968, Jean-Luc Godard's personal politics were already Marxist and antiestablishment and his early films reflect such sentiments. The French film industry in the late 1940s was directly affiliated with the French Communist Party and his peers at the various cinema clubs he frequented in Paris definitely reflected the industry wide political bend.[62] As an aspiring filmmaker, Godard was part of a culture which was already politicized and it is no surprise that his films would exhibit clear political themes. His *Le Petit Soldat,* released in 1963, concerns the oppressive nature of the de Gaulle government regarding Algerian revolutionaries and was made in the wake of French censorship against films which addressed contemporary politics.[63] Other directors in France were also grappling with similar issues within and during the production of their films, sparking debates in the film industry concerning Vietnam War and the Chinese

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[61] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 7.

[62] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 11.

[63] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 82.

Cultural Revolution.[64] Anger toward the French government and their production guidelines which heavily censored films that dealt with politics would come to a head in February of 1968 when Godard and his contemporaries protested the removal of Henri Langois from the Cinémathèque by the French government.

For activists like Godard, the firing of the Cinémathèque's director signaled the de Gaulle government's direct imposition on cinema and disregard for the realities of French life. It was often the case that Langois did not fulfill the expectations of politicians who supplied the institution's subsidy by showing controversial films which did not bring direct glory to France.[65] Godard would challenge the French government over the termination of Langois on the grounds that to do so was essentially fascist because it could mean an end to showings of radical or controversial films.[66] From the Cinémathèque scandal, one can see the beginnings of Godard's need to engage with politics when they come into contact with the world of cinema.

Gorin, Mao, and the Fight for Cannes

Godard's political leanings and subsequent body of work can be attributed in large part to his long time collaborator and eventual partner Jean-Pierre Gorin. He became Godard's first link to the revolutionary fervor of French students and first to engage Gorin's concept of "aesthetics as a kind of politics" through the pair's discussion of

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[64] Donato Totaro, "May 1968 and After: Cinema in France and Beyond." *Off Screen* 2, no. 2 (1998).

[65] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 321.

[66] Julia Lesage, 'Godard and Gorin's Left Politics, 1967-1972', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 28, (1983).

problematic politics within cinema.[67] The two came to understand themselves and each other as creators of a New Leftist cinema and rebels against past bourgeois forms. Because of his influence, Godard became interested and active in a Maoist circle at the Ecole normale know as the "Union des jeunnesses commistes (marxistes-léninistes)". The ideology of Mao Zedong as idealized at the Ecole normale sought to rid society and culture of bourgeois influence through direct force. In the case of French Maoists, their calls to action stemmed from an intellectual adoration of China's Red Guard and their work to purge China's supposed anti-proletariat culture. 1967's *La Chinoise* is the most apparent influence of Gorin himself and the Maoist group on Godard's work; Gorin even wrote the script.[68] As Godard's politicization of film progressed, it would be Gorin's ideology steering the majority of his work and overt politics as well as giving Godard a view as to how new methods of filmmaking should be created in the context of Mao and Althussser's ideology.[69]

What is most apparent about Godard's politics in mid-1968 is how he became such a vocal proponent for the student protestors. His Maoist associations had already primed Godard for supporting an absolute cultural overthrow against the de Gaulle government and a society obsessed with consumerism. In his model, the entire social and political structure would be infused with proletariat concerns regarding the role of industry and governmental power, but it was May 1968 which sparked the director's most

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[67] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 301.

[68] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 300.

[69] Steve Cannon, "Godard, the Groupe Dziga Vertov and the Myth of 'Counter Cinema'." *Nottingham French Studies* 32, no. 1 (1993), 77.

Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 301.

radical period of political actions in association with the students. He and several collaborators had taken to the streets alongside the May protestors in Paris as the city became embroiled in strikes. The result of Godard's efforts, a now lost twenty minute documentary known as *Actua One,* followed his usual style of layering political speech over images of revolution.[70] The filmmaker also attended meetings of an organization known as the Etats généraux du cinéma which was composed of film technicians and students who sought a general strike against the film industry and the Cannes Film Festival. Though their membership was in the thousands, the Etats généraux du cinéma's only lasting legacy became the protest and attempted shutdown of the Cannes Film Festival, resulting in Godard's most famous feat for the student movement. [71]

Godard's protests against the festival were tied to his overt exasperation that it was not showing adequate support of the students and workers and instead "talking about tracking shots and close-ups." He envisioned a new cinematic methodology which only portrayed the struggles and perspectives of the students and exalted their political ideology to the masses. For the most part, Godard's actions at Cannes were done in conjunction with François Truffaut who came to embody the more rational, composed revolutionary while Godard's frequent outbursts led other filmmakers like Roman Polanski (who was three years Godard's junior) to refer to the pair and their comrades as "little kids playing at revolutionaries".[72] Still, many other filmmakers and industry

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[70] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 330.

[71] Richard Kelly, "Cannes 1968: Fighting on the Beaches." Focus Features. 2008. Accessed September 25, 2015.

[72] Kelly, "Cannes 1968: Fighting on the Beaches."

professionals at the festival did hold solidarity with the student protestors and began withdrawing their films and stepping down from juries. The festival only truly shut down after protestors, including Godard and Truffaut, physically blocked the showing of a film and a brawl ensued. [73]

The Dziga Vertov Group

Prior to 1968, Godard had already rejected classical Hollywood conventions of linear storytelling, and was a founder of the French New Wave.[74]As 1968 became increasingly political, he paralleled in various interviews and table discussions the revolutionary tactics of the student protestors and proletariat supporters the world over with his own filmmaking methods. Godard essentially felt that his role in the greater political fabric of the late 1960s was to revolutionize cinema in much the same way that the students were revolutionizing France. Moreover, he asserted in a 1968 panel discussion that there is no difference between filmmaking and social commentary in any regard. From his viewpoint, the new forms of cinema and cultural revolution so sought after by agitators even outside of Europe are inextricably linked.[75]

Indeed, the result of May 1968 in Godard's work was the formation of the Dziga Vertov Group alongside Jean-Pierre Gorin, a filmmaking collective which emphasized Marxist ideology while calling attention to the problematic nature of conventional films with their commodification of art.[76] The group's name was derived from Soviet

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[73] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 331.

[74] Amber McNett, "Politics of the French New Wave." newwavefilm.com. 2009. Accessed September 26, 2015.

[75] Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, 32.

[76] MacBean, "Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group", 33

documentary filmmaker Dziga Vertov whose aesthetics, which arose in the 1920s after the creation of his "WE: Variant of a Manifesto", were viewed by Godard and Gorin as a direct "political act".[77] Vertov's approach toward cinema emphasized the camera as a tool for showing objective political and social truth in the context of a Soviet revolution and also emphasized the audience's perception and exchange with any given film.[78] Godard disowned his past work, claiming that it was the product of his own bourgeois thinking and lifestyle. Calling his earlier films "my dead corpses", Godard and his collaborators began to develop and "make political films politically".[79] This method of filmmaking stemmed from the concept that the documentation of events and the use of montage could create new, disparate, even fictional images which illuminate revolutionary struggles; as Godard puts it, "the split between documentary and fiction is false".[80] In Vertov's methodology, audiences were to be shown images and concepts which force them to "see the world in the name of the proletariate revolution", in the words of Godard. He and Gorin diverge from this ideology somewhat and recognize that "new forms to fit new content" must be found in order to convey a revolutionary sentiment. The new reality of the Soviet Union that, in Godard's view, turned away from true Marxist ideals had effectively rendered Vertov's terminology passé and unable to reflect the concerns of the student protestors.[81] The work of Godard and Gorin within the Group thus becomes an

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[77] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 351.

[78] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 351.

[79] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 354.

Donato Totaro, "May 1968 and After: Cinema in France and Beyond." *Off Screen* 2, no. 2 (1998).

[80] Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, 60.

[81] Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, 63.

attempt to marry wholly new aesthetics and cinematic forms with the political atmosphere of Europe in the late 1960s in order to contextualize class divisions.

In many respects, Godard's place within and work under the influence of the Dziga Vertov Group was done with the direct intention of documenting and conveying the ideology of the May 1968 protestors. There is an indication that Godard felt he owed the students and workers some form of cinematic recognition and, of course, had a profound respect for their ways of discovering and adopting new revolutionary politics.[82] He also recognized that the protestors had weakened past cultural, political, and social pillars in favor of an enlightened future, but Godard saw altering the aesthetics of the dominate culture as his responsibility and a method of dismantling it altogether.[83]

Godard also began to propose that one's life must be completely altered in the spirit of revolution and that virtually all trappings of bourgeois life must be abandoned.[84] Because of this, he appeared to become separated from and reject the French film industry and non-revolutionary social life in the immediate period of the May protests and while active in the Dziga Vertov Group. Godard was still making films, of course, but there are instances in the French press where he is implied to have "disappeared" in contexts outside the Group.[85] Godard actually did not attribute his name to any films made during the Group period with the understanding that to be artistically reliant due to

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[82] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 335.

[83] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 336.

[84] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 337.

[85] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 355.

one's name only reflected the commodification of art by bourgeois power structures.[86] Also, the Dziga Vertov Group championed and began to parrot Vertov's own diffusion of "his individuality into the forces of the revolution" in the words of Group member Jean-Henri Roger.[87] The correct method of film directing needed, in their view, to become distanced from name recognition and past individual artistic or commercial achievements.

Godard Distanced from the Students

Keeping all of Godard's revolutionary efforts in mind, there was a considerable backlash against him and the Dziga Vertov Group from student protestors both within and outside of France. One notable group, the Situationists, with their goal to "revolutionize everyday life" under the influence of Guy Débord wished to show and create "situations" which were outside of usual capitalistic existence.[88] They also advocated complete cultural restructuring by removing power from the bourgeois class and turning to anarchy and thus targeted Godard for his references to past Hollywood films and the use of industrial methods in the creation of high culture.[89] Many also took offense with the way Godard seemingly dictates revolutionary methods back to the students through his speeches, interviews, and films made all the more problematic by his past bourgeois

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[86] James Roy MacBean, "Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group: Film and Dialectics", *Film Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1972) 32.

[87] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 351.

[88] Müller, "What Did They Think They Were Doing?: The Political Thought of 1968 Revisited", 94.

[89] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 337.

lifestyle and upbringing.[90] For example, in 1968's *A Film Like Any Other,* Godard seemingly implies that students should work for industrialists by making statements in the narration such as "If cars interest you, you can go work at Renault." [91] One of his more popular films *One Plus One,* also filmed in 1968, took its title from a slogan written on the Sorbonne creating the impression that Godard was appropriating the student's revolution for his own artistic purposes.[92] That being said, Godard's use of student sourced images and phrases could be understood as his break from and rejection of symbols of the Old Left. The director saw the propaganda posters of May 1968 were something completely produced by the New Left and therefore should be infused within his films. For Godard, the New Left's expansive goals of social restructuring were best manifested through cinematic productions which infused the intellectual with the artistic.

Godard's standing in France was waning but he did find a considerable amount of acclaim and popularity in the United States. Many of the interviews and panel discussion in which Godard relates his ideology were done at American universities and institutions and contain a palpable level of reverence from the interviewers and the audiences. For American students and intellectuals, he became something like an artistic icon and an outside voice concerning Hollywood and how it "reflects an unhealthy society".[93] Godard also exhibited his films wherever or whenever on tour in the United States and because they were so rarely distributed, film students and intellectuals would flock to his

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[90] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 4.

[91] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 339.

[92] Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, 52.

[93] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 323 & 324.

appearances.[94] Often, his tours were sold out at universities, prompting Francis Ford Coppola to call University of California, Los Angeles and University of Southern California students "Godard addicts".[95]

It was during such appearances that Godard played to the sensibilities of those in the audience by decrying the majority of American films and the large studios. The director had always been against Hollywood's style and its industrial methods of entertainment creation from the beginning of his career, but his appearances in the United States absolutely reinforced his political and artistic objections to the American studios.[96] For example, in a series of four panel discussions at the University of California, Los Angeles, Godard mentions many times that he would never work in Hollywood and mourns the fact that other avant-guard directors have begun working with the studios.[97] Much like Marcuse, Godard asserts through his work in the late 1960s that mass media and artistic productions have the potential to unduly affect society. He sees the influence of American films, despite the fact that he uses American cinematic methods and aesthetics throughout his career, as leading to a greater degradation of the revolutionary social scene he saw first hand in France.

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[94] MacBean, "Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group", 32.

[95] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 323.

[96] Lesage, "Godard and Gorin's Left Politics".

[97] Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, 21.

Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, 12.

Godard's Cinematic Experiment

Completed in June of 1968, *Le Gai Savoir* can be considered Godard's first foray into implementing the methodology of the Dziga Vertov Group. Shooting took place prior to May, but through the use of editing, narration, and the insertion of revolutionary images, the film effectively becomes an extended montage of the movement's aesthetics and ideology.[98] Of course, in keeping with revolutionary cinematic conventions, *Le Gai Savoir* has no overarching narrative which is notable considering the film was commissioned by a French television studio for exhibition on the small screen.[99] That is not to say the film does not have structure: It primarily portrays a young revolutionary couple (Émile and Patricia) who meet and discuss the nature of revolution and the nature of cinema. Their discussions overall provide the context for and perspectives of May 1968. For example, Émile asserts that he intends to take part in a protest multiple times throughout the film and reflects upon past violence he has endured on the streets at the hands of police. Throughout *Le Gai Savoir,* Godard wishes to show his admiration of the students by documenting their revolutionary vision and giving them a place within the cinematic art form.

Another structural facet of *Le Gai Savoir* is its almost minimalistic mise-en-scène. Émile and Patricia during their discussions are shown against a black, void-like backdrop, making the television studio itself seem cavernous. They also listen to a faint radio broadcast which also portray the concerns and beliefs of the student movement. It is if

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[98] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 338.

[99] James Monaco, "*Le Gai Savoir*: Picture and act—Godard's plexus", *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 7, (1975).

they are castaways discussing a conflict that Godard does not show and political speech which arrives seemingly from the ether. Like his other May 1968 film, Godard does show revolutionary slogans and posters around the Parisian cityscape but does not show Émile or Patricia interact with them in any way. This is strange considering that Godard hoped to marry revolutionary images and languages in order to engage his audience. The film instead appears like a manifesto or generic political speech that has been shot for the screen and not like a wholly new cinematic creation. In this respect, Godard becomes inarticulate in depicting the Dziga Vertov Group's methods and even the students themselves.

Émile and Patricia discuss the dialectics surrounding television and film and how those mediums may be used for revolutionary purposes.

What makes *Le Gai Savoir* a prime example of the Dziga Vertov Group's methodology is how directly it relates its internal ideology to the audience. Godard himself acts as narrator for a large portion of the film and shows repeatedly that he is toying with past cinematic conventions. Not only does this alienate the audience, it forces them to reconsider the decision making processes of other filmmakers and the overall political message of the film. Godard is not simply showing revolutionary images and ideas, he is bringing his audience into the conversation and asking them to make their own conclusions. This audience engagement was one of the most important aspects of the Dziga Vertov Group's ideology in that they wished to end simple consumption of films as an industrial practice and widespread passivity when taking in political rhetoric.[100]

With all attributions to the May 1986 protestors aside, *Le Gai Savoir* reflects Godard's own vision for what course the movement should take. Godard connects cinema to revolutionary concepts throughout the entirety of the film and implies symbolically that a renewed understanding of the art form will strengthen the movement altogether. In the opening scene of the film, for example, Émile states that he was saved from a policeman's bullet thanks to a cinema magazine in his shirt pocket. Godard also champions television as a revolutionary tool; the young couple discuss in detail how the medium can bring political discourse directly into people's homes. In *Le Gai Savoir* the implication is clear, mass media can have a direct impact on the spread and internalization of revolutionary sentiment. As previously stated, student groups like the Situationists took issue with Godard's cinematic methodology and how it appeared to

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[100] Cannon, "Godard, the Groupe Dziga Vertov and the Myth of 'Counter Cinema'", 78.

appropriate revolutionary sources in a consumerist way. The Situationists viewed Godard as merely perpetuating "bourgeois society" through what they saw as derivative work and asserted that, despite his relatively young age, the director could never properly put forth their brand of social upheaval. *Le Gai Savoir* provides the greatest insight into the objections of other groups not simply because Godard rejected past cinematic norms but because his idealized image of May 1968 was translated through what more radical protestors who rejected virtually all "official culture" considered a bourgeois medium when under the influence of Godard.[101]

Le Gai Savoir also gives a direct view into how Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group were questioning and bringing new understandings to the relationship between language and image. During one of the discussions between Émile and Patricia, the conversation turns toward how creators must find new ways of expression in the context of revolutionary politics. Of course, in this case, Godard is communicating the Dziga Vertov Group's own cinematic conventions and their hope of discovering "images and sounds that are free" as stated within the film. It is also made clear that images and sound are something to be studied in order to understand their use and thus break them from bourgeois meanings and intentions. In such sequences, the director appears to be speaking directly to the revolutionaries of 1968 and instructing them on how to consume or produce cinema for their own purposes. There are scenes in the film which appear as a sort of word association and feature Godard asking three individuals their perceptions of a variety of words. One of the interviewees is an elderly, working class, and candid man

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[101] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 337.

and another is a young child with very little understanding of the words being asked. It is as if Godard is going directly to the source of what language should be and showing his audience specifically how one must go about reconsidering revolutionary dialectics.

Because of Godard's emphasis on audience engagement, it should be clear exactly who the Dziga Vertov films were being made for. Revolution and rejection of industrialism is something virtually all New Leftists promote for the entirety of society, but the Dziga Vertov Group productions were meant specifically for Maoist militants with very similar affiliations and backgrounds as Godard and Gorin.[102] The Group did recognize that they did not share the same experiences and background as the workers and students that made the bulk of the protests and understood that it was their duty to provide an intellectual viewpoint in film. Godard is therefore explaining, dissecting, and making the case for the Dziga Vertov Group's ideology specifically for *Le Gai Savoir*'s audience.

The Group Goes Mainstream

Tout Va Bien, released in 1972, is considered the last Dziga Vertov Group film made by Godard and has become one of his more popular films. Like *Le Gai Savoir, Tout Va Bien* breaks from the conventional film narrative although it was made with more Hollywood sourced techniques in mind. Godard understood the film as being something wider audiences would be able to grasp and possibly be entertained by with a large amount of political ideology.[103] Gorin directed the majority of the scenes in the film after Godard's traumatic motorcycle accident which greatly affected his mobility and kept him

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[102] MacBean, "Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group", 34.

[103] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 359.

in pain for months. One could argue that this could have altered Godard's intent with the film, but the decision to let Gorin direct speaks to Godard's confidence in his colleague and how the Dziga Vertov Group functioned artistically. These men all had the same intent for the work they sought to produce and were so ideologically similar in terms of undermining bourgeois art forms and the nature of individual fame that they could direct each other's films. That being said, Godard still possessed a large amount of oversight concerning the film's overall themes and thus let his personal politics and artistic direction flow through Gorin. Somewhat hypocritically, Gorin began watching Godard's past films in order to copy the filmmaking style once he was given the director's chair. [104] Gorin and Godard recognized that audiences would have expectations in terms *Tout Va Bien*'s overall style. It is notable that the Group would seemingly bend to commercial expectation and in some ways go directly against their own ideological assertions.

For the most part, *Tout Va Bien* can be understood as a beginner's guide to Godard's views toward cinema after 1968. The film openly comments on filmmaking conventions such as the various stages that a love affair will seemingly always pass through and how that affair will come to an end. Godard also breaks the fourth wall multiple times throughout the film and causes his characters to explain their motivations and political ideology directly to the audience. Such commentary and rejection of bourgeois conventions comes at the very beginning of the film with the audience being told virtually how the film will end. It is as if the audience is being primed for what is to come and being forced to view the film with new eyes, they are given no choice. *Le Gai*

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[104] Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 361.

Savoir uses a very similar methodology in alienating the audience, but Godard is much more blatant and simplistic in *Tout Va Bien.*

In terms of the film's overall structure, it primarily focuses on the experiences of a young, bourgeois but leftist couple as they encounter and are tasked to report on a wildcat strike in a sausage factory and struggle to understand and convey the revolutionary events of 1968 which surround them. The couple Suzanne and Jacques are themselves barricaded in the factory's offices with the boss, a caricature of a fat capitalist. Their role becomes one of documentation and an attempt to understand the motivations of the striking workers so that they may be conveyed to the media via Suzanne's job as a journalist. In many ways, the two characters of Suzanne and Jacque are very much like Godard who sought to balance an accurate documentation of the protestors with his place as a film industry professional, as was the case with Jacque. Jacque is shown to be a commercial director within the film, but perhaps this is Godard's recognition of his own revolutionary failings in the years after 1968 and his past bourgeois lifestyle.

Tout Va Bien also works to highlight the inherently industrial nature of the filmmaking process. There is a striking opening sequence at the beginning of the film which shows seemingly endless checks being written to countless people for countless purposes all signed by Godard. Clearly, the director recognizes that he embodies the role of an industrialist and that outside of limited circumstances, film is an inherently industrial practice. This theme of industry and what it means in an artistic sense extends further into the film as shown in the quotation that even "outside the factory, it is still like a factory". The film is also rife with consumerist images such as billboards and an

extended sequence which shows Jacques directing a stocking commercial. All of this anti-industrial rhetoric culminates in the last scene of the film which shows a Communist activist peddling reading materials in an enormous supermarket. In a 1972 interview, Godard claims that the French Communist Party was in reality selling materials at the same store that was used for shooting.[105]

The aforementioned grocery store scene highlights another major theme within *Tout Va Bien,* the growing rifts between factions of the New and Old Left. As the Communist Party official hawks his wares, students run through the aisles of the grocery store and are shown to create true and active change in their environment by disrupting the status quo of the store outright. The students not only alter the social order within they grocery store, they highlight the ineffectual methods of the Communist party official. This extends to the scenes during the factory strike with the workers directly altering power structures while Union leaders disagree with their actions. There is a strong implication in the film that the inaction and superiority complex of the Communists Party officials is holding the true revolutionaries back.

Such disregard for the Old Left bureaucrats was absolutely shared by the students of May 1968 and clearly became something Godard wished to highlight within *Tout Va Bien*. The film also has all sides during the factory conflict speak directly to the camera framed in medium shot and explain their situation and perspective to the audience. The factory manager and union leadership are implied to be greedy and self serving in their efforts while the workers are shown in a wholly sympathetic light. Their role within the

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[105] Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, 61.

film thus becomes a mouthpiece for the student protestors who Godard so deeply respects and shows the heightened level of nostalgia which the director seemingly had for the events of 1968.

Union representatives from the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) assert that the strike as shown in *Tout Va Bien* is essentially against their objectives as an organization.

In the scenes which show the factory workers more intimately, one can see Godard grasping when trying to illustrate their motivations and by extensions the motivations of the May 1968 students. Those who Godard is holding up as pure in their revolutionary sentiment, such as the young mother who works in the factory and helped entrap the manager in his office, are completely unsure of the next steps they should take. Their advisories, the manger and the union representatives, know their exact intentions and beliefs while the factory workers may speak of changing the systems they are under, but they remain for the most part unsure. This is a common issue throughout the film

which becomes more apparent as the narrative progresses. Characters look back on the events in the factory and during May with a sense that things were destined to "return to normal" and that it was a "silly and romantic" time. In other words, Godard feels that the movement is something to be reflected upon in terms of its overall fervor but it could not be sustained due to a lack of political intention and goals.

Overall, *Tout Va Bien* and *Le Gai Savoir* illustrate not only Godard's efforts to revolutionize cinema but also the overwhelming influence of the protesters of May 1968 on his work. Without their engagement with Marxist theories and extensive demonstrations, Godard would not have been so inspired to make such bold artistic and political statements through the Dziga Vertov Group films. The students, not some cinematic movement or shift in artistic style, led Godard to outright consider his own place and the place of his work within the revolution as well as enshrine their politics in his own hugely influential filmography.

In his relationship to the students of 1968, Godard is unusual in regard to the attitudes of his artistic contemporaries. He is a young filmmaker producing films for young audiences like himself who, at least during the late 1960s, shies away from critiquing the protestors in any way. Pier Paolo Pasolini, with his Old Left approach to politics, provides another viewpoint to understand 1968. Pasolini's approach to cinema was also highly theoretical but his writings and cinematic works cast doubt on the motivations of student protesters and question if their methods of political involvement deserved respect from Old Left institutions in the first place.

Chapter Three: Pasolini and Fascism's Pervasiveness

On November 1, 1975, Pier Paolo Pasolini gave an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa.* "We are pushed and pulled around like a strange dark army, some of us fight with the heavy artillery, others with just a metal bar. As it usually happens, the group gets divided and some decide to fight with the weak ones. But I think that, in one way or the other, we are all weak because we are all victims." With interviewer Furio Colombo, he speaks of the power of education, the ways that society must change and suggests that the interview be titled "We Are All In Danger". He states, "Everybody knows that, as a person, I do pay for what I say. But there are also my books and my films that end up paying for me." By the morning of November 2, Pasolini's tattered and charred remains were found on a desolate beach.[106]

Throughout his life and career, Pasolini would prove to be a highly contentious figure in both the cinematic and political realms. He is absolutely an Old Left figure whose political understandings grew out of a life marked by Mussolini's regime and a personal motivation to preserve the lifestyles of Italian peasants and working class. Still, he simultaneously lived a life that was outside the traditionalism he so loved and used within his artistic works. Pasolini's highly observational and penetrating commentaries on the political, social, and cultural situations of the Italian people come from a

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[106] Pia Friedrich, *Pier Paolo Pasolini*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers. 1982), 39.

recognition of power imbalances, be they on the part of right or left aligned organizations. For Pasolini, the simple lives of the proletariat were meant to be protected and prioritized over whatever New Leftist movements which emerged in Italy.

Background and Political Involvement

Like Godard, Pasolini's upbringing was greatly influenced by what he refers to as his "petit bourgeois" roots and an early introduction to fascist ideology.[107] The director was born in Bologna in March of 1922, mere months before fascism took power in Italy, to a father whose military affiliations easily acclimated him to Mussolini's regime.[108] Pasolini's family's association with fascism would influence his eventual participation in the Italian Communist Party, especially after entering the University of Bologna in 1939. Until his involvement in various literature clubs and friendships with non-fascists, Pasolini considered himself a "natural fascist" and assumed that adherence to the regime was the default political stance. His first break with fascist ideology came with the understanding that his own life and literary work should be aligned only with his personal morality as opposed to increasing propaganda for the state. [109]

One way that Pasolini rebelled against the fascist state was through his use of Friulian language in his poetry during World War II. Because the fascist government was so focused on creating a unified Italian culture, regional dialects spoken throughout Italy were either repressed or outlawed. The region of Friuli was also highly inundated with Resistance activity during the second World War and is still considered to be a culturally

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[107] Friedrich, *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, 1.

[108] Enzo Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*. (New York: Random House, 1982), 29.

[109] Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 58.

autonomous region. [110] Though Pasolini did sympathize with the Resistance, his decision to use Friulian in his poetry is more closely tied to the fact that it was Pasolini's mother's first language and he heard it spoken constantly in his childhood. To connect so intimately with aspects of the past is a theme which appears throughout the majority of Pasolini's work. For example, his first film from 1961 *Accattone* features Romanesco, a dialect of Rome's working class and rural poor.[111] This use of the suppressed or lesser known languages of the poor and peasantry is one of the dominant ways that the director shows his outright admiration for the diversity of the Italian people. Virtually all of his cinematic works showcase this diversity through the use of unprofessional actors who are of the same background as the characters they portray. Despite his middle class upbringing, Pasolini clearly connects to the lower classes via their traditional ways of life. He even states that it was witnessing the struggle of Friulian farm hands against their landlords that brought him to Marxism.[112] For Pasolini, the safeguarding of peasant culture and the rise of the proletariat are something that go hand in hand.

When examining Pasolini's artistic history, it is key to understand that he always understood himself as a poet and author. He began writing poetry at the age of seven under the instruction of his mother and would often organize poetry meetings in his college years with his less than interested friends.[113] As previously stated, literature allowed Pasolini to understand the world in terms of "human sympathy and reciprocity"

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[110] Friedrich, *Pier Paolo Pasolini,* 5.

[111] Patrick Rumble, "A Cinema of Poetry," Artforum.com.

[112] Friedrich, *Pier Paolo Pasolini,* 7.

[113] Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 55.

rather than war making and nationalism.[114] Poetry, literature, and eventually cinema opened Pasolini to being more cognizant of the needs of the lower classes and the power structures which existed during his lifetime.

The director's more typical political actions began with his alignment to the Italian Communist Party (P.C.I.) at the close of World War II. For Pasolini, joining the P.C.I. in 1947 was a challenging decision due to objections concerning the aspirations of the party, particularly their disregard for peasant culture and their unwillingness to maintain Friuli's political autonomy.[115] Pasolini's relationship with the Italian Communist Party would become even more problematic with the involvement of the Christian-Democratic Party, an organization which opposed Communism within Italy and promoted traditional values. The Christian-Democratic Party lambasted Pasolini in the press over his suspected homosexuality and intimate involvement with minors with the intention to delegitimize his political work and influence. In the late 1940s, Pasolini gained considerable amounts of political clout in Friuli while balancing his poetry and a teaching job in a state school. When Christian-Democrats heard of Pasolini's homosexuality, they placed pressure on both Pasolini and the P.C.I. to exclude him from any further political actions. The various rumors sparked by the Christian-Democrats effectively forced Pasolini to leave Friuli and he was eventually expelled from the P.C.I.[116]

"The Cinema of Poetry and 1968"

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[114] Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 57.

[115] Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 98.

[116] Friedrich, *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, 9.

Shortly after the release of his *The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964), Pasolini published what would become a hallmark of the Italian cinematic scene, "The Cinema of Poetry"[117] The essay outlines the "infinite possibilities" of a cinematic author due to the outright lack of a semiotic tradition in the cinema.[118] Unlike literary authors, Pasolini writes, filmmakers create meaning in the works they produce from their own experiences and internal sign-making. In other words, the images, themes, and mise en scène produced by a particular filmmaker imbue the audience with a direct view into "the world as seen through his own eyes". In "The Cinema of Poetry", Pasolini cites Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert (see chapter 4)* as being a prime example of what is referred to as the cinema of poetry. Antonioni not only created a film which is highly stylized and evocative of greater social issues, he portrays the film's world as if it were through the eyes of his protagonist, a neurotic middle class woman.[119] Her internal world is cold, depressed, and industrial and so Antonioni reflects her anxieties through both the landscapes of *Red Desert* and the language that characters use in their interactions.

When looking at Pasolini's own attitudes toward politics and cinema's need to adapt to poetic forms, it is odd that the director would have such reverence for Antonioni. As will be shown in the next chapter, both directors posses a contempt for the Italian middle class and have Marxist backgrounds, but Antonioni is much less concerned with making films that have any sort of theoretical backing.[120] That is not to say that Pasolini

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[117] Friedrich, *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, 22.

[118] Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry", (1976), 2.

[119] Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry", 8.

[120] Bert Cardullo ed., Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 132.

is at fault for citing Antonioni in "The Cinema of Poetry", but there is not a sense in Antonioni's other works or interviews have gave concerning *Red Desert* that he was aware of the artistic implications or even innovations contained within the film. Antonioni saw the deep psychological introspection of his protagonist and its reflections in the landscapes around her only as an interesting way to convey the film's story. Although Antonioni does have deep political motivations like Godard and Pasolini, he does not extend his revolutionary perspectives as overtly into the works he produced. As stated by Pasolini in "The Cinema of Poetry", Antonioni's revolutionary stance in his work comes from a decided break from the formalism of the past. Pasolini asserts in his essay that Antonioni's perspective shift in which he substitutes his own "vision" for that of his protagonist is well on the way to proper class consciousness within filmmaking.[121] An emphasis on the individualism of any given filmmaker and a profound break from the conventions of old, both New Left concepts, is what Pasolini conceives to be the initial steps toward a poetic form of cinema.

In terms of Pasolini's attitudes about the students of 1968, he maintains a distinctly Old Left perspective. One of the primary examples of his distain for the methods and overall ideology of the students can been seen in a number of short poems published in a magazine titled *Nouvi Argomenti.* The verses speak of Pasolini's personal support of the police that battled protestors on the streets of Rome in March of 1968. He writes, "I sympathized with the cops! Because the cops are sons of the poor ..." and "They're twenty years old, your age, dear boys and girls." [122] The police were indeed an

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[121] Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry", 8.

[122] Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 325.

overt symbol of Italy's fascist past to the students but they were still genuine victims of the bourgeois power structure due in Pasolini's view to their assumed working class backgrounds.[123] Pasolini clearly does not see the protests and efforts against the Italian Communist Party as valid political statements by the radicalized youth of Italy. Instead, the director addresses the subjects of his 1968 poems as if they are petit bourgeois children playing revolutionaries not for the benefit of the lower classes, but for their own selfish interests. This critical stance against the students eventually resulted in Pasolini himself being branded as a fascist and in many ways influenced his 1969 film *Porcile.* Such themes of revolution as youthful fad, the miss judgement of bourgeois youths, and the alienation of the lower classes runs throughout *Porcile* and provides bitting insight as to how an Old Leftist like Pasolini approached the so-called "spoiled kids".[124]

Porcile and the Students of the Bourgeois

In many ways, 1969's *Porcile* can be understood as Pasolini's method to criticize both the fascism he witnessed in his younger years and what he saw as problematic with the student revolutionaries. The film's plot is also highly dualistic and switches back and forth between the escapades of an unnamed man turned cannibal wandering through a volcanic landscape and a highly wealthy German family whose son turns from appropriate society. The former storyline does much to promote the film's overall theme of desolation and alienation from society and its landscapes are highly reminiscent of Antonioni's *Red Desert*. In the film's second storyline, Pasolini is much more direct in his

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[123] Luana Ciavola, *Revolutionary Desire in Italian Cinema*. (Kibworth Beauchamp: Troubador, 2011), 58.

[124] Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 326.

criticism of the industrialists either in Germany or across Europe and how student protesters perform a predetermined role within society.

The two characters within *Porcile* that Pasolini uses to exhibit his views toward the students are Julian and Ida, a young couple who are engaged but behave antagonistically toward each other. Julian in particular treats their relationship as an inconvenience and is both emotionally and physically alienated from Ida and his family at different points in the film. In one scene, Julian is shown to be in some sort of coma and in another, it is revealed that he prefers to spend his time with pigs that are kept on his family's property. Not only that, Julian is often shot either physically distanced from other characters or is framed in huge rooms within the family's estate. The grand mansion in which Julian and his family live lends an even stronger sense of solitude and coldness; none of the rooms used for filming are seemingly lived in and have the (most likely intentional) appearance of being sets. The idea that youths are becoming increasingly alienated in society is something that Pasolini stressed within his poetry and other cinematic works and this is clearly shown within *Porcile*.[125]

In many respects, the family villa itself can be construed more than just a set but rather an entity to which the characters are extrinsically linked. There are no shots which show the family outside its expansive grounds, even business transactions on the part of Julian's father take place in his home. Not only that, the characters are almost always shot in a static, constrained way, so much so that they appear unnaturally stiff in their interactions with each other. Pasolini contrasts their actions (or lack thereof) with the

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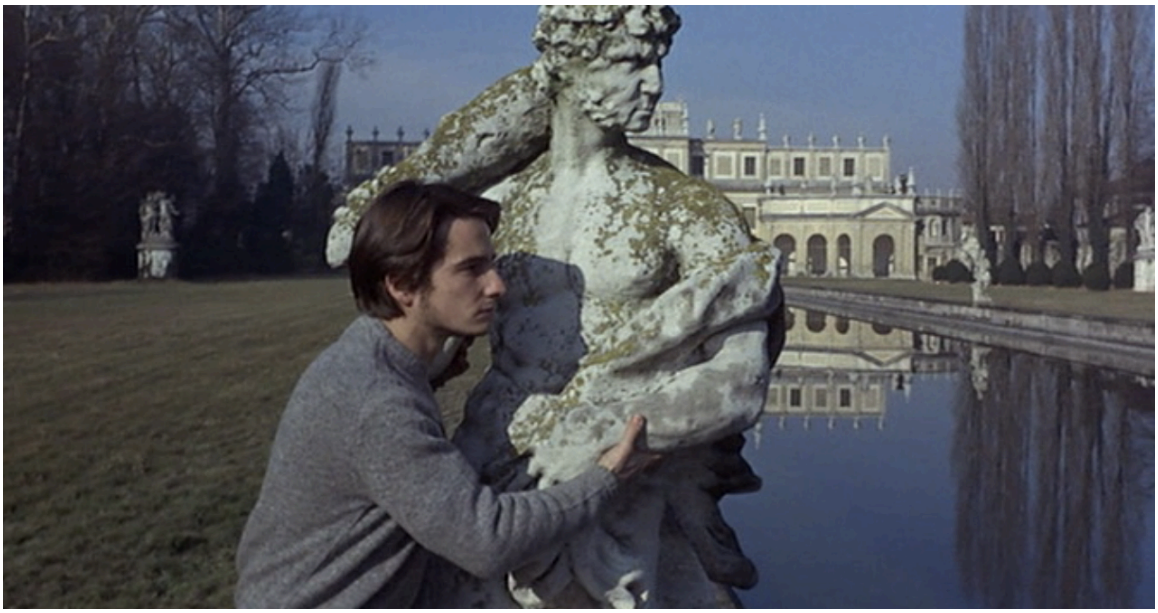
[125] Marco Cupolo, "Other Youths: Italian Cultural Changes through Pasolini, Giordana, Petraglia and Rulli," *Studies in European Cinema*, 129.

events which take place in *Porcile*'s second plot line of the volcanic waste. There is little dialogue on the part of those who walk in the wilderness but their actions, such as the consumption of human flesh, speak volumes about their internal thought processes. It is as if the bourgeoisie have become like the pieces of furniture which surround them, always stagnant, and without affecting their world in any lasting way.



Julian discusses the implications of being involved in a protest with his fiancé Ida; their paths are similar in terms of politics and perspective, but the couple will not meet each other half way.

Another prominent theme that runs throughout *Porcile* is the life of fascism after the dissolution of Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy. Julian's father, Herr Klotz, is portrayed as a typical industrialist early within the film in his concern for the political affiliation of his son and the actions of his business rival Herdhitze. Still, the audience is in on Pasolini's antifascist implications for the film the moment Herr Klotz enters the frame with his pencil mustache and oily black hair. He is simultaneously imposing and

comical, shot in closeup from low angles while pulling absurd facial expressions that distract from the horrors he eventually discusses. In one extended sequence, a conversation between Klotz and a colleague turns to details of the holocaust and the involvement of Herdhitze. Klotz, instead of being ashamed by Herdhitze and his own fascist past, recounts the days of Nazi Germany with glee. There is a sense that Klotz and his contemporaries pine for the days when their power to suppress, maim, and kill could be done more overtly. Not only that, Klotz references that Herdhitze has received a new name and plastic surgery to distance himself from his Nazi past. Pasolini clearly sees the work of industrialists in the late 1960s across Europe as fascism being reborn and rebranded but with the same intentions to remove and suppress those they do not deem acceptable.

All this being said, Klotz's fascists attitudes do not extend into his own household. Ida makes it known that she will attend a student rally in Berlin and calls Julian a "disgusting individualist". The reaction from Klotz and his wife is simple acceptance of her political views as if the protests are inherently meaningless and are something done by young people to pass the time. When Julian is in his comatose state, Klotz also makes the statement that by being in a truly passive state, his son was "useless" to him. In the world of *Porcile* and by extension Pasolini's viewpoint, the bourgeoisie have accepted that their children will rebel against them in some way and take it as the natural order of things. The social world which Pasolini is examining no longer allows true rebellion within its confines and implies that the ultimate irony is when bourgeois youths attempt to take up Marxist ideology and adopt revolutionary language which they can never

understand. If anything, Pasolini's examination of the 1968 students in *Porcile* encompasses why so many within the Old Left were unwilling to work with the protestors and why the director predominately supported the working class police. The students, in their view, were only children giving into a fad regardless of their underlying motivations or possible working class background. One can also see within the character of Julian conceptions of alienation as outlined by Marcuse and also utilized by Michelangelo Antonioni in his 1964 film *Red Desert.* Like virtually all of his peers in the perception of Marcuse, he has become weakened by a culture which emphasizes the consumption of commodities over allowing the individual to flourish.[126] Julian, with his self imposed removal from acceptable society, has thus fully embraced and comes to illustrate the alienating aspects of the industrially driven world.

The Prevalence of Fascism in Salò

Much like *Porcile,* 1975's *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom* also looks deeply into the mechanisms, depravity, and pervasiveness of fascism. The film itself was based on the novel *120 Days of Sodom* by the Marquis de Sade and maintains both the author's depictions of violent sexuality and outright distain for the upper classes. That being said, Pasolini's adaptation focuses on the fascists who controlled portions of Italy at the very end of World War II. The choice to place *Salò* at the end of the war was highly intentional on Pasolini's part; the time frame is "poetic" because it gives the audience a sense that the film's events did not continue long after the end of the narrative and shows how the

[126] Marks, The Meaning of Marcuse, 68.

"anarchy of power" functions without formal authority.[127] In terms of the plot, the film details the progressive violence of four men of power as they victimize young men and women who have been captured by their personal band of soldiers. They also utilize four middle age prostitutes who recount their own highly sadistic and disgusting sexual escapades to "inspire" the captors as they perform increasingly warped tasks.

When viewing *Salò,* one of its obvious features is the use of gratuitous and violent sex. The film was banned in Italy even after Pasolini's mysterious murder on November 2 of 1975 and rumors swirled while as the film was being shot.[128] Even now, *Salò* is considered one of the most disturbing and challenging films viewable in the mainstream.[129] Pasolini's use of violent imagery and subject matter is only to provide, in his words, "an allegory of the commodification of bodies at the hands of power." [130] In the directors view, the actions of the fascists in his film serves as a reminder to both what actually occurred at the hands of governments and what was occurring at his time as a result of consumerism. Many scenes within *Salò* show the four men of power dragging the enslaved victims into corners or side rooms in order to gain sexual pleasure via rape or torture. In this way, Pasolini highlights the perceived power which totalitarian governments hold over not only the bodies of people but also their minds.

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[127] Celluloid Liberation Front. "The Lost Pasolini Interview." mubi.com.

[128] Friedrich, *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, 39.

Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 385.

[129] Patrick Rumble, "A Cinema of Poetry," Artforum.com.

[130] Celluloid Liberation Front. "The Lost Pasolini Interview." mubi.com.

Though *Salò* primarily concerns itself with portraying, as Pasolini understood it, the ultimate ends of fascism it also attempts to reconcile the "new" fascism of a post World War II Italy. In several interviews prior to *Salò*'s filming, the director draws parallels between the power structures which existed under Mussolini and Hitler and the power which is held by consumerism. Just as the fascists years prior sought cultural hegemony, the director views Italian consumerism as performing similar functions and likens the societal changes to cultural genocide.[131] Pasolini brings this concept forward in an early scene with a quote from one of the film's domineering men, "All things are good when taken in excess". *Salò* clearly connects consumerism and fascism through how the four men of power co-opt and consume the bodies of those in their possession. Fascism within the film becomes a metaphor for the greater social processes which concern Pasolini, especially those which seemingly degrade the traditions he holds so dear.

In terms of appearance, *Salò* is shot in a straightforward style that highlights the film's internal nihilism. Many scenes, specifically those which include the most depraved acts, are arranged and shot like a staged play. The events which occur are preformed only for the sexual entertainment and gratification of the four fascists. They, in the context of the film, have no greater internal motivation than becoming gratified from the power they maintain over others. Those who are under their control are also not allowed any sources of comfort, either in the form of religion or each other. The only element of comfort or hope which appears in *Salò* comes at the end when two young men slow dance and one admits that he has a fiancée. Even after what they have endured, these two seemingly

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[131] Roberto Chiesi, "*Salò*: The Present as Hell" criterion.com, Accessed March 20, 2016.

insignificant characters still have the ability to look to the future. They, like the Italian people, are not the total lost causes which Pasolini makes them appear and have the ability to thrive despite prevailing situations of power.

At the hands of the *Salò*'s fascist villains, victims are made to suffer constantly and without pity; even ownership of their own bodies has been stripped from them.

Interestingly, *Salò* also delves into the ritualistic aspects of both sex and how power is exerted over individuals. One scene shows a young man and woman being forced into a mock wedding ceremony, complete with nude groomsmen and bridesmaids. When the ceremony is completed, whatever union which was formed between the young couple is quickly broken by yet another forced rape by one of the men. Other scenes showcase such inverted rituals, even the four powerful men marry each others' daughters in order to cement their newly formed union of violence with each other. The use of ceremony is interesting within the context of Pasolini's life both because of the influence of the Catholic Church in his own life and the appreciation he held for aesthetic aspects

of religious ritual.[132] Within *Salò,* rituals become yet another metaphor for the methods through which power is asserted. In other words, things which once held innocence are transformed into tools which further oppress individuals.

As one can see in both *Porcile* and *Salò,* Pasolini's greatest strength as a director is his ability to insert such focused ideas and observations into his films. As a philosophical figure, he blurs the lines between conceptuality as presented in his "The Cinema of Poetry" and functionality in how his ideas about cinema translate to his own work. Pasolini clearly shows his audience the sheer possibilities of film in showcasing political ideology. Not only that, his unique perspective as an Italian, a poet, and an unconventional individual for his time appear vividly within the entirety of his work. His complicated relationship with the students of 1968 and his objections to consumerism within Italy which give *Porcile* and *Salò* their meaning are thus perfect in seeing how Pasolini brought the poetry of his own life and political perspectives to the artistic medium of cinema. As a director, he remains influential because he understood film outside of its previous creative boundaries and pushed to create works that were truly poetic.

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[132] Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, 76.

Chapter Four: Antonioni Examines Alienation, Consumerism, and American Counterculture

Of the directors discussed in this thesis, Michelangelo Antonioni's attitudes toward the students of 1968 and the countercultural movement itself are the most difficult to surmise. None of his films directly address, critique, or promote the ideology and actions of the movement, as was the case with Godard and Pasolini. Antonioni, though a proponent of leftist ideals from the very beginning of his career, takes a more individualistic approach when discussing politics through his films. In some respects, Antonioni's critiques of the middle class and society's "sick eros" paint him as a New Left figure who hopes to analyze the underlying issues of the world that the students were so eager to address.[133] Antonioni in actually rejected the work of the Italian students and felt that their efforts could do little in the greater scheme of Italian politics.

The films directed by Antonioni, unlike those of Godard and Pasolini, supposedly do not possess an underlying cinematic ethos. When discussing his work, the director states, "these images have no explanation, no raison d'être beyond themselves". [134] He also conveys repeatedly that his only intention through film is to convey narratives and

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[133] Peter Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55.

[134] Richard Phillips, "Michelangelo Antonioni - A Flawed Legacy." World Socialist Web Site. 2007. Accessed September 26, 2015.

characters' interpersonal conflicts to his audience. In other words, Antonioni likes to say that he is nothing more than a storyteller whose only interest is accurately capturing the personal struggles of his characters be that through dialogue or by translating their internal states in a respective film's aesthetic. One would think that Antonioni would therefore not be admired by Godard and Pasolini due to such a lack of cinematic procedure and objective . In reality, his work figures squarely into Pasolini's methodology of filmmaking as outlined in "The Cinema of Poetry" and he was highly admired by Godard in all aspects of his filmmaking style. Antonioni clearly exists as a foil to Pasolini and Godard but also a contradiction as an maker of "art films" who possesses no overt desire to break cinematic barriers in a revolutionary context.

Antonioni's Middle Class Background and the Impact of Fascism

Like Godard and Pasolini, Michelangelo Antonioni's background is middle class. Born in 1913 in Ferrara close to Bologna, the director studied economics and business administration at the University of Bologna and refers to his education as a relatively unhappy time due to a strong lack of interest in his studies.[135] His relationship with cinema began in 1935 as a film critic for *Corriere Padono,* a Ferrara newspaper, which progressed to an attempted documentary which focused on a local mental asylum. Interestingly, after moving to Rome in 1940, Antonioni took up a writing engagement with the film journal *Cinema* which was at that time oversaw by the Mussolini regime.[136] *Cinema,* despite its fascist associations, spearheaded the Italian neorealist movement

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[135] Bert Cardullo ed., *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 61.

[136] Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni*, 15.

through its writers' social criticism and analysis. Though Antonioni left the journal within a few months over differences concerning his disinterest in the technical aspects of film, his time there and at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia sparked his career as a director concerned with highlighting the political and social concerns of the Italian people.[137]

With the start of World War II, Antonioni was drafted into the Italian military which gave him the opportunity to work as an assistant under the French director Marcel Carné in Nazi occupied Paris. Though his time in the military opened further chances to work with other notable French directors, Antonioni was forced to return to Italy as Allied forces increased pressure on the Italian fascist state. The director was also continuously writing during the war, highlighting films that were deemed controversial by Italian censors due to their portrayal of the working poor. In one instance, Antonioni praised Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* from 1943 which gave a stark portrayal of working class like in an article for anti-fascist magazine *Italia Libera.* The director's early acceptance of neo-realist cinema and admiration of Visconti's work brought outright indignation from politically motivated censorship boards.[138] At the time of the Mussolini regime, films were often expected to focus only on the cheerful or pleasant aspects of Italian life and censors openly forbade directors from documenting or dramatizing the contemporary ills of Italian society. It was only after the fall of the fascist government in

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[137] James Brown, "Michelangelo Antonioni." *Senses of Cinema* 20, (2002). Accessed January 13, 2016.

Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni,* 16.

[138] Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni*, 16.

1943 that Italian neo-realism was able to flourish through its use of the common people within narratives and off-set shooting locations.[139]

Truly, Michelangelo Antonioni's body of work was shaped by this emergence from strict censorship and a movement which sought to highlight the struggles and flaws of those of all class backgrounds. He greatly understood neo-realism's political implications in how it worked against fascist ideals of personal and communal contentment through submission to an authoritarian state. Antonioni's first completed film, a documentary known as *People of the Po Valley,* reflects this desire to "understand the world through image", in the words of the director.[140] That being said, Antonioni's focus on the poetic nature of cinema and highly personal struggles of his characters rather than their simple daily struggles means he cannot wholly be considered a neo-realist director. The director's most notable work, in contrast, focuses on the deep seeded issues that exist in the Italian middle class and how they move within their highly troubled social world.[141] In a 1962 interview, Antonioni states that the period immediately after World War II fostered neorealist film because "everything happening around us was quite abnormal; reality was a burning issue."[142] His approach, unlike his contemporaries, focused not on how individuals interact with their surroundings but the internal changes and eccentricities which they exhibit. Instead of analyzing the pains of society's downtrodden and the desolate nature of their lives, Antonioni looks to the Italian upper

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[139] Phillips, "Michelangelo Antonioni - A Flawed Legacy."

[140] Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonion*i, 17.

[141] Phillips, "Michelangelo Antonioni - A Flawed Legacy."

[142] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 22.

classes for inspiration specifically because they are morally desolate and have "plenty of raw material worth examining".[143]

Antonioni's primary reason for including the Italian middle class to such an extent in his work stems from his own perceptions of his family background. In fact, the directors referred to his father as a "small industrialist" and openly spoke of his class status as being hugely informative in his cinematic work in various interviews and panel discussions.[144] The middle class were the people that Antonioni "knew best" and he felt that in knowing them, he could portray their anxieties in the then rapidly industrializing Italy.[145] Still, Antonioni's political views concerning the middle class are not as sympathetic as they might first appear. The director has criticized them through his films and personal statements by stating that the Italian bourgeoisie are the "worst such class in the entire world" and are a symptom of a society "loaded down with old and stale stuff - habits, customs, old attitudes that are already dead and gone." [146]

Views on Cinema, Views on Class

In terms of Antonioni's exact politics and how they compare to the politics of his revolutionary contemporaries in the cinema, he is much less engaged with their movements when compared to Godard or Pasolini. The director often avoids placing labels on his political affiliations in interviews and states outright that he is "not a

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[143] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 23.

[144] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 61.

[145] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 63.

[146] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 144.

Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 59.

communist".[147] He even distances his cinematic work from the philosophical contexts that Godard and Pasolini are wont to do as in their work in the Dziga Vertov Group or through "The Cinema of Poetry". Instead, Antonioni claims that his goal as a director amounts to "telling stories, to narrate with images -nothing else" and that his methodology relies on his instincts and feelings as opposed to schematics and philosophizing.[148]

Keeping his comparative differences to Godard and Pasolini in mind, it should be noted that his *Red Desert* from 1964 was highly influential in the eyes of Pasolini and defines exactly how directors should unify their artistic visions with the perspectives of their characters. Pasolini's "The Cinema of Poetry" outright calls *Red Desert* Antonioni's "most authentic work" and uses the film as a model for which all "poetic" films should utilize.[149] Antonioni's new cinematic forms within *Red Desert,* though he himself cannot or will not verbalize them, are poetized through the film's distinctive mise en scène as it is shaped by Giuliana, a highly neurotic middle class woman.

If Antonioni does have an ethos toward filmmaking, it is only relating to reflecting his vision upon the screen. In his view, the role of the director is absolutely essential in dictating how various elements of the production come together to form a cohesive film.[150] Many directors across various styles of filmmaking share this

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[147] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 144.

[148] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 56.

Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 132.

[149] Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry", (1976), 8.

[150] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 49.

perceptive, but it is relevant in the case of Antonioni because it highlights his attitudes toward actors and studios and the subsequent tension that arose during the filming of 1970's *Zabriskie Point.* His methodology does not extend past his own introspection and there is no sense that Antonioni's work progresses past what is commonly referred to as an "art film". In other words, his cinematic motivations in the context of the late 1960s have nothing to do with inspiring wider political change or altering the predominate cinematic language. Antonioni, in many respects, is a foil to the changes that were occurring in the European film scene in 1968 and shows though one may make films which work outside conventional systems, their motivations might not be related to inspiring what Godard or Pasolini would call true change.

In terms of the messages that do appear in his films, they are much further in the background. In other words, he could never conceivably make a film like *Le Gai Savoir* or *Salò*, even with his strong distain for the Italian middle class. Even with this attitude in mind, Antonioni approaches his characters with an attitude of introspection rather than accusation. Take, for example, the protagonist of *Red Desert*: her anxiety and strife which results from class specific societal pressures is meant to elicit sympathy from the audience. Antonioni's other Italian language films like *L'Avventura* (1960), *La Notte* (1961), and *L'Eclisse* (1962) present a very similar attitude when the bourgeoisie are in focus. It is as if the audience is asked to recognize both what the Italian bourgeoisie is doing to harm wider society and how they enact pain upon themselves. If anything, this tension within Antonioni's films possibly reflects his own anxieties which arise from being within a class that he has come to overtly oppose both politically and artistically.

Just like his characters are alienated from their own society, he is also alienated from his own upbringing.

All this being said, Antonioni's views and political perspective are absolutely Marxist and can provide some reflection on the politics of Italian students. Like protestors in Turin and Rome, Antonioni was also highly against the rapid industrialization taking place across the country and symbols of Italian capitalism such as FIAT and *La Stampa*, a newspaper which the company controlled.[151] Still, with his background of disregarding the expectations of the Mussolini regime and support of the Italian communist party, Antonioni is absolutely an Old Left figure who believes that the working classes hold upmost importance in the creation of new political systems. With respect to the New Left, Antonioni felt that the Italian students were anarchistic and tended to "form themselves into mystic groups".[152] This attitude toward the Italian students seems hypocritical, especially when considering his adoration for countercultural movements outside of Italy, specifically referencing the "spirit" he saw at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.[153] It was as if Antonioni recognized some internal motivation or ethos in the American protestors that he did not see in their Italian counterparts. The director, in some respects, helps emphasize the importance of the American students on the global revolutionary stage of 1968. Perhaps he saw their actions and social realities as having the ability to properly address his concerns

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[151] Stuart Hilwig,"The Revolt Against the Establishment." In *1968: The World Transformed*, edited by Carole Fink, Phillip Gassert, and Detlef Junker. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 339.

[152] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 83.

[153] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 149.

regarding the industrialized world and the class conflicts in Italy. Eventually, Antonioni would pay tribute to non-Italian activists in his first two English language films, *Blow Up* and *Zabriskie Point.*

The Alienation of the Middle Class in *Red Desert*

Antonioni's primary film which addresses the alienation of middle class is his first color film from 1964, *Red Desert.* Its plot focuses on the experiences and inward reflections of an emotionally disturbed woman known as Giuliana who, against striking backdrops of cold industry and disingenuous relationships, attempts to find some sort of motivation or meaning in society. *Red Desert,* in many respects, was Antonioni's most critically acclaimed work and brought him recognition from the international film community.[154] This was the film that Godard stated in 1968 he "wanted to make" which is expected, considering *Red Desert*'s careful use of landscape and color in order to convey the protagonist's inner anxieties.[155]

Even with all of Antonioni's talk of detailing the neuroses of the Italian middle class, there are traces of political rhetoric especially in the film's opening scene. The audience is shown, in the midst of imposing industrial structures and apathetic officials, a strike against a plant managed by Giuliana's husband. This strike is not mentioned again at any other point in the film but that could be Antonioni's reflection on how the Italian bourgeoisie view the working class who do engage in political activities. Because the middle class has become so detached and contained within themselves thanks to the

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[154] Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni*, 90.

[155] David Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews, (*Jackson: University Press of Mississippi,1998), 46.

industry society, even events which threaten their status quo occur in the background of their lives and are seen as wholly irrelevant. Giuliana does interact with the workers in this scene, but only to ask if she can buy some food from one of them. In this scene, she is framed in wide shot, making her seem small and physically distanced from the men around her.

In terms of *Red Desert*'s overarching aesthetic and mise en scène, Antonioni gives the majority of the film a highly stylized appearance through out of focus shots and striking use of color. Repeatedly, characters rise out the fog which surround them and are contrasted by it, much like the opening credits of the film where Antonioni overlays text on blurred, disjointed shots of gray industry. It is as if the characters simultaneously arise out of the waste while being enveloped by it. The director primarily achieves this effect through flat, evenly colored backgrounds and landscapes which appear almost like that of a painting. Indeed, Antonioni states in an 1975 interview with *La revue du cinéma* that he literally painted a section of forest gray to "make it look like the color of cement".[156] The only scene of the film which does not included such use of industrial colors when Giuliana creates a story for her young son. With Giuliana's narration, the scene show a young girl on a vibrant beach. In a 1964 interview with Godard, Antonioni states that his scene, with its natural colors becomes an unconscious escape for his protagonist.[157] *Red Desert* as a artistic product clearly wishes to assert that all aspects of reality are being absorbed by the flat coldness of industry and its processes and that escape can only come from imagination.

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[156] Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni*, 91.

[157] Jean-Luc Godard, "Godard Interviews Antonioni, *Cahiers du cinéma,* (1964).

The fog and steam which appear throughout the film also serve to highlight the alienation of characters from each other. In a scene toward the end of the film, protagonist Giuliana threatens suicide by driving toward the edge of a dock after becoming distressed over a diseased ship close by. Giuliana and the other characters who appear in this scene were very clearly enjoying themselves minutes prior to this scene and were connected both emotionally and erotically. When they find Giuliana at the end of the dock, they are shrouded in fog and clearly alienated from each other. The shots on the dock mimic the earlier shots of industrial landscapes where Giuliana is also distressed and asks for food from workers. In the mind of Antonioni, even when characters are literally removed from industry, the alienation it has caused within them continues.

Giuliana and her son appear stark, alone, but clearly affluent against the industrial background, this overarching tone of loneliness spans the entirety of *Red Desert.*

This theme of alienation in surroundings repeats throughout the rest of the film, especially when Giuliana interacts with other middle class individuals. In a cramped and sexually charged scene where she meets with her husband and some of their friends, she is often shot in close up which not only increases the claustrophobic feeling of the scene but makes the audience identify more with Giuliana. One major conflict within the film that she tackles is the reliability of her own mind and if she has lost links with the reality of her own life. Scenes where Giuliana's irrational actions and emotional responses are made sympathetic by Antonioni only strengthen *Red Desert's* message concerning the inner strife of the middle class. This theme is also highlighted in Giuliana's obsession with the objects that surround her. In one scene opposite love interest Corrado, she claims that she wants to "possess everything" in order to gain some sense of permanence in her life. Perhaps this outcry is Antonioni's way of stating that the belligerent consumerism which he sees emerging in Italy is a product of increasing emotional instability in the middle classes.

Zabriskie Point and Countercultural Individualism

After the critical success of *Red Desert* and the public acclaim of 1966's mod classic *Blowup*, Antonio's interests shifted toward the American counter cultural scene and the politics of, again, middle class students with 1970's *Zabriskie Point*. The film itself was meant to tap into the then growing student led protests across the country.[158] When looking back on Antonioni's body of work, it seems odd that the director would

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[158] Matt Smith, "Zabriskie Point." *Brattle Theatre Film Notes*. Brattle Film Foundation. Accessed January 13, 2016.

shift focus so abruptly to the American countercultural movement. It is also strange that Antonioni felt he could truly convey the changing moral tides and political motivations of American revolutionaries. He was, after all, 56 when the film began production in 1968 and had never been closely associated with New Left American politics which are showcased in the film such as student led direct democracy and black power organizations.

The exact inspiration for the film came after Antonioni witnessed protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The director had already decided that the film would focus on two American youths but it was the antiauthoritarian spirit of the protests which helped shape what ideas would be conveyed within the film.[159] Even the actors chosen for leading roles, then absolute unknowns, had a hand in inspiring the film's narrative and lent their names to their respective characters in *Zabriskie Point.* In a 1968 interview, Antonioni states that this creative decision was made to directly show that the film could conceivably happen to the real Daria Halprin and Mark Frechette. Antonioni's approach to *Zabriskie Point* helps to show his distant ties to Italian neo-realism especially when considering that he wishes to document the attitudes and experiences of American students.

Despite the authenticity that Antonioni attempted to inject into *Zabriskie Point,* certain aspects of its production proved questionable in relation to its countercultural audience. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, a historically conservative and of course capitalistic film studio, provided the film's seven million dollar budget and even Antonioni's most

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[159] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 149.

loyal fans questioned this partnership of art film director and monolithic Hollywood studio.[160] Antonioni does assert that he was given virtually limitless creative control which makes sense given the success of *Blow Up* with American audiences. That is not to say the film's production was without its problems, Antonioni found American production techniques and the overall attitude of set workers to be wasteful and consumeristic.[161] His perceptions of Americans and their consumerist attitudes are very overt within *Zabriskie Point*, perhaps Antonioni's experiences while working with an American studio bolstered his decision to include anti-consumerist sentiments in the plot and imagery. To make this message clear, Antonioni includes gratuitous shots of billboards and advertisements around the Los Angeles area that seem to overwhelm the viewer. Although the director was concerned with consumerism in Italy, he more directly associates the trait with the American public and landscape.[162]

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[160] Smith, "Zabriskie Point."

[161] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 75.

[162] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 144.

The final scenes in which Daria imagines exploding items such as television sets, Wonder Bread, and Special K cereal are one of the more overt instances of Antonioni's critique of consumerism.

One can also see in *Zabriskie Point* that Antonioni cannot resist critiquing the middle class, whether they are Italian or not. Mark is shown briefly to have a sister who he encounters in a lush Los Angeles neighborhood as she drives a convertible. The scenes in which Daria interact with her employer at an enormous home in the desert, much like certain scenes in *Red Desert,* have a very distinct sense of alienation. At this point in the film, Daria had just learned of Mark's death and has clearly been altered by their brief relationship. As she stands at the foot of a stream that has become part of the home's architecture and allows the water to flow down her body, it is made apparent that Daria has been renewed because of her interactions with Mark. The final scenes of *Zabriskie Point* culminate with Daria leaving the home and a vision of it exploding along with consumerist trappings such as cereal boxes and television sets. Daria has thus become

truly alienated from her prior middle class existence and visually an agent of violent change.

The conversations held between Daria and Mark primarily focus on his role in university strikes and the workings of his ideology. Daria assumes that Mark was a aligned member of the group and begins to question the overall ideology of the mobilized students. Most notably, she questions whether or not Mark is allowed to smoke pot and states that those who are within the campus organization are on a "reality trip" and that they "can't imagine things." There is a sense from Daria's overall attitude toward the movement that they are just as oppressive as the society they work to change. Even though Antonioni's attitudes toward American protestors of the late 1960s were more accepting than those he held toward Italian students, this dialogue from Daria asserts that the championing of the collective over that of the individual will always be a symptom of "mythic groups".[163]

What is most striking about *Zabriskie Point* is how closely Antonioni focuses on the actions and perceptions of his central protagonist Mark. A clear ideological gulf thus appears between Antonioni and Jean-Luc Godard, a director who respected his work to such a high degree.[164] The differences between the two filmmakers, especially in the late 1960s, can best be seen in a scene at the very beginning of *Zabriskie Point* which shows a charged meeting of students planning a strike. They are shot in close up as they outline the diverging struggles and ideology of black and white revolutionaries, what they perceive as fascism encroaching on their campus, and how to mobilize more students to

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[163] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 83.

[164] Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews,* 46.

their cause. At this point in the film, one could easily mistake the film as one of Godard's projects. The language of the meeting and words spoken between the students devolve into rumblings that the audience can barely piece together let alone understand. Not only that, Antonioni's use of close ups gives the scene a very hectic and claustrophobic feeling, as if the camera and thus the audience cannot concentrate on any specific speaker. The students in the meeting are crammed together in a small meeting space and yet they are never in wide shot or appear as a collective. Antonioni even further develops the sense of alienation of at the beginning the scene by including discordant music and whispering voices that are nearly impossible to discern. As with *Red Desert,* the images are blurred, disjointed closes ups and it takes several minutes to determine that one is viewing a political meeting. The audience thus develops a sense of uncertainty before they are even aware of the film's content.

When Mark, the protagonist, claims that he would die for the cause "but not of boredom" and leaves the meeting altogether there is a marked shift in the tone and intention of the film. The other students assert that Mark should turn away from his "middle class individualism" and that "there is no revolutionary without other people". The audience does not see such overt political organization again throughout the rest of *Zabriskie Point* and the film primarily follows Mark through his exploits. As previously mentioned, *Red Desert* has a very similar opening scene where political organization and rhetoric is only used to give context to a highly individualistic narrative.

This distinct focus on individualism is the primarily overarching theme of *Zabriskie Point* and causes the film to have a more conventional Hollywood structure.

There is very clear progression within the plot and a somewhat generic love story between Daria and Mark. Again, this only serves to show exactly how uninterested Antonioni was with disrupting the status quo of filmmaking. After all, this is the director who said in a 1982 interview when asked about politics in his films that "plot is most important".[165] Antonioni's major concern as a filmmaker, especially with regards to *Zabriskie Point,* relates to making a thought provoking film which captures the essence of any particular time, group, or social problem.

Keeping his films and attitudes toward student led political movements in mind, it is apparent that Antonioni is a contradictory figure in the late 1960s historical moment. On one hand, he relishes in the individual "spirit" of the American counterculturists but disregards the actions of protestors from his home country. He also neglects that one of the underlying motivations of the Italian students, the recognition and attempted resolution of a sick society, repeats itself time and again in his films.Antonioni places working class issues to the wayside, despite his Marxist tendencies, in order to instead examine the internal struggles of the middle classes, as was the case with *Red Desert.* He creates from what he "knows best", the Italian middle class, and what he objectively what he could never really know, young American counterculturists.[166] Even in terms of his relationship with the cinematic world, Antonioni paints himself as a lowly storyteller who uses cinema as an artistic medium. Those who admired his work, in reality, adopted its methodology in order to create something they felt was wholly new and something that could change cinema forever. In the wider scope of Pasolini, Godard, and 1968,

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[165] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 164.

[166] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 63.

Antonioni appears initially as a baffling foil to everything these entities strive for but he is still adopting the ideologies which sprang from the New Left, specifically their approaches to alienation and the sometimes problematic nature of the middle class.

Conclusion

The feeling of newness, a swift and strong break from the ways of old, is a theme which runs throughout specific facets of 1968, Godard, Pasolini, and Antonioni. Just as the students of 1968 wished to form a new reality for their society, the directors wished to change the realities of cinema. For Godard and the students, the need to create and exist outside the confines of the past could not have been stronger. Godard, of course, took up the cause of the protestors most readily but his insistence to transfer their momentum to the film world is what makes him truly unique. The Dziga Vertov Group is attempting to be the most overtly revolutionary and prop up New Left ideas, but what of Pasolini and Antonioni? In the case of Pasolini, his cinematic revolution stems from his "The Cinema of Poetry" and its new attitude toward the place of the director as exemplified by Antonioni's *Red Desert.* Antonioni, despite his insistence that his role as a director is only to "tell stories and narrate with images", approaches his subjects in a way which could most likely not be done by any other director.[167] In his hands, the struggles of the individual, be they American hippies or the Italian middle class, are put within a greater revolutionary context.

What is most essential about the three directors is that they provide new perspectives and critiques when looking at the students of 1968. Through their work, one can answer the question of "How do we consider their movement in relation to the

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[167] Cardullo, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews,* 132.

traditions of the lower classes?" or "How does one translate New Left ideas to an artistic medium?". The directors provide new, engaging ways of understanding New Leftist social and political perspectives by folding them into their artistic creations. In the end, the protests of 1968 did comparatively little to change their political or cultural reality, but they do showcase how social upheaval can be adopted and interpreted by directors who remain continuously influential.

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